



City of Charleston
South Carolina

JOSEPH P. RILEY, JR.
MAYOR

BARBARA W. VAUGHN
DIRECTOR
PUBLIC INFORMATION

For Immediate Release

Statement from Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr.:

On Wednesday, August 29, 2007 the *Post and Courier* reported that a South Carolina OSHA official stated that the work uniforms that the City of Charleston Fire Department uses are not in compliance with State OSHA rules. The City received a determination in 2004 that these uniforms were indeed in compliance with OSHA standards. There has been no communication with the City since then, either written or verbal, to indicate otherwise.

The uniforms at issue, which were approved by SC OSHA in 2004, are the daily work uniform worn by our firefighters and are covered by a firefighter's personal protective equipment outerwear during active firefighting. This personal protective equipment is fire resistant and protects the skin and other clothing worn underneath from high temperatures. On Thursday I spoke with Dorothy S. Ison, SC OSHA Administrator, and she confirmed that the statement attributed in the *Post and Courier* to SC OSHA Public Information Officer Jim Knight, asserting that the current uniforms were not in compliance, was not accurate.

Notwithstanding this, I want to ensure that there is no question about the safety of our firefighters. Wednesday, I met with Chief Thomas and directed that we begin the process of acquiring new daily work uniforms. Since the work uniforms were an issue which the Fire Review Task Force was also looking into, also on Wednesday I spoke with Chief Gordon Routley, the leader of our Fire Review Task force, and discussed the current issue of the uniforms. He concurred with my decision that we begin immediately to set in motion the process of having the Charleston Fire Department work uniforms changed to a material recommended by the national experts of our Fire Review Team.

Chief Thomas has begun working on the change of material for this uniform. The current uniform presents a crisp, professional appearance – the same reason our Army continues to use polyester uniforms. Nevertheless, I believe it is important to allay any safety concerns with regard to these uniforms for our firefighters.

FOR MORE INFO:

Barbara W. Vaughn, Director
Media Relations/Public Information
Phone: (843) 724-3746 Fax: (843) 724-3734
Email: vaughnb@ci.charleston.sc.us